stitution. It is plain to see from this that once labeled as mentally ill and committed, a person may experience extreme difficulty in returning to the community in the sense that he belonged prior to being so "diagnosed." His competence may be questioned in terms of future employment, purchase of insurance, ability to execute a will or to procure a driver's license, and in many other ordinary activities.

There is no way to predict how long a person may remain in an institution. Several factors wholly independent of the supposed mental illness of the "patient" are important. His social class, the degree of crowding in the hospital, the interpersonal relations between the "patient" and the therapists and attendants, and the existence of people interested in securing his release are major factors in this determination. Many hospitals are in fact so overcrowded and understaffed that the medical personnel must function primarily in an administrative capacity. Where this is so, there can be no denial of the fact that the institution serves a primarily custodial function.

THE NEED FOR FUNDAMENTAL RULES

It seems quite clear that because of our faith in the psychiatric expert as an authoritative delineator of "mental illness" we are faced with one of the most severe challenges to civil liberties and personal freedom in contemporary life. Significantly, this challenge to freedom has arisen while we have expended an enormous effort convincing ourselves (on a conscious level) that we are helping people. Perhaps, as Professor Thomas Szasz, himself a psychiatrist, has suggested, we need a "Bill of Rights for the Mentally Ill" and that people even ought to have a "right to be mentally ill."

These seem strange ideas and doctrines for an era in which it has become polite to agree that "mental illness" is just like any other kind of sickness and that it should be treated by people in the same way. Nonetheless, if we are to stop the remedy from being worse than the "disease" we must reexamine many of our uncritically accepted notions such as mental illness, commitment, and criminal responsibility.

It must be remembered that we are dealing with public issues. Judgments here need not be the property of people who have been awarded the label "psychiatrist." Enlightened citizens have an obligation and right to contribute to policy formation involving fundamental rules for a society.

In doing this, however, let us remember that we are all *potentially* dangerous.

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